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Alberta tests federal greenhouse gas emissions plan

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Body

Imposing a federal carbon tax in Alberta as a matter of national concern would "greatly distort and alter" the division of power between provinces and the federal government, a lawyer for the Alberta government argued Monday.

Challenging the federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act - which imposes a federal carbon tax starting Jan. 1, after the United Conservative Party government cancelled a provincial carbon tax in May - at the Alberta Court of Appeal, lawyer Peter Gall argued the act opens the door to federal overreach into provincial powers, calling it "invasive and pervasive."

However, the Government of Canada is expected to argue over the course of the three-day hearing in Edmonton that imposing a federal carbon tax plan is not only necessary, but allowed under a section of the Constitution Act that permits the federal government to legislate on matters of "national concern."

"Climate change is a national emergency that affects our health, our way of life and actually our lives. We've seen the wildfires here in Alberta, we've seen floods," said Josh Ginsberg, lawyer with **Eco Justice** representing the David Suzuki Foundation, one of 13 intervenors expected to make arguments both for and against the federal carbon tax.

"This is an emergency and we need national action to tackle it," Ginsberg said, speaking to media outside of court Monday.

Alberta's carbon levy was repealed on May 30, and the federal government made good on a promise to impose a regulatory charge on fuel - charging \$20 per tonne of carbon emissions in 2020 rising to \$50 per tonne by 2022 - starting on Jan. 1.

The federal government said its Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act is designed to be revenue neutral, putting about 90 per cent of what is collected through consumer carbon taxes back in the pockets of individual Albertans.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney established a \$30-a-tonne carbon tax on large industrial emitters, however, that plan fell short of satisfying the federal government's requirements.

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